

Closer Look with Col. Tony Francis

Sergeant First Class Matt Howard:

We're talking about the environment today, because Earth Day is just a few weeks away, and joining us is Colonel Tony Francis, the commander of the U.S. Army Environmental Center. Thanks for joining us on a Closer Look.

Colonel Tony Francis; USAEC Commander:

You're quite welcome.

Sergeant First Class Matt Howard:

Let's talk about the U.S. Environmental Center. Why does the Army need an Environmental program?

Colonel Tony Francis; USAEC Commander:

Soldiers are the centerpiece of the Army, and the environmental programs ensure the soldiers have a place to train, ranges to train on, and be able to train in a way where they will be able to perform their mission throughout anywhere in the world where they are called to.

Another goal we have, is that our young soldiers learn proper environmental techniques, that they learn the rules, than years from now when their sons and daughters are in the service of our country, they'll have the same sustainable lands and training areas that they have now.

Sergeant First Class Matt Howard:

Usually we're thinking about logistics...you know, the beans and bullets of keeping troops equipped and ready to fight, but you're using sustain in terms of the environment. Is there a relation?

Colonel Tony Francis; USAEC Commander:

There is. Traditionally we do use it as in, what do we need to get to war, but for sustainability the way I like to look at that is kind of like, in high school when you saw someone pull up in an old Ford, that was just in mint condition, Ford Mustang, convertible, and you knew that somebody took care of that vehicle for years and years. Changed the oil, changed the tires, tuned it up. We have to do the same thing with our environment. We have to do things to it now, so that it is sustainable. For the long term, so that we when we use it now, we'll be able to use it again in the future.

Sergeant First Class Matt Howard:

A lot of challenges out, what sort of the challenges is the US Army Environmental Center taking on?

Colonel Tony Francis; USAEC Commander:

Besides the challenges of spills, which is one of the things that I think our soldiers learn a lot of, motor pool operations, what to do, refueling operations, etc... I think for the Army Environmental Center, and for the Army in general, one of the challenges right now, is the need for training areas.

As our Army is going into a doctrine for the twenty-first century, and we need more and more training space, we're finding that the communities are getting closer and closer to our Army Installations. So one of our biggest challenges is to create a buffer between us and the local communities.

Sergeant First Class Matt Howard:

So has the Environmental Center had any successes in dealing with those challenges?

Colonel Tony Francis; USAEC Commander:

Absolutely.

We have been doing clean up on our installations for so long, that agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), have looked to some of the “Best Practices” that we have implemented in our own Army installations.

As a matter of fact, in less than 9 years the Army will have completed is clean up of all their installations, and either have cleaned everything up or have a long-term clean-up process in place. So its very good news for us, being good stewards of the environment.

Sergeant First Class Matt Howard:

Earlier sir, you were talking about a few of the things that soldiers can do to maintain the environment, like filling in the foxholes. What are some of the other things to keep in mind?

Colonel Tony Francis; USAEC Commander:

Just like many of the things we did growing up. To conserving energy turning off electricity, not running your vehicle when you don’t have to keep

the air pollution down. A lot of the same things we do as civilians to conserve, we can do in the military, so actually it's an easy process for many of our soldiers to know and understand.

Sergeant First Class Matt Howard:

Sir... Earth Day coming up April 22nd, how is the Environmental Center and Army installations through out the world celebrating Earth Day, and what do you want people to keep in mind?

Colonel Tony Francis; USAEC Commander:

The Army and a nation have celebrated Earth Day for about the last thirty-five years. This years theme or Earth Day of "Sustaining the Environment for a Secure Future", represents our commitment to the nation, to maintain an Army that's trained and ready in an environment that's will be here today and well on into the future. So what I ask the soldiers out there, and their family members as well as the civilians and contractors that work for the Army, to do something with the local community, to celebrate this great country, the environment we have and to share with the Army its sustainability.

Sergeant First Class Matt Howard:

Well thanks for joining us today on a “Closer Look” today sir. My guest has been Colonel Tony Francis, Commander of the U. S. Army Environmental Center.